
Government of the District of Columbia



Metropolitan Police Department

Testimony of
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Chief of Police

**Joint Public Hearing on “Government Facility Security
Amendment Act of 2005,” Bill 16-388**

**Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chair**

**Committee on Government Operations
The Honorable Vincent Orange, Chair**

Council of the District of Columbia

October 21, 2005

Council Chamber
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Chairpersons Mendelson and Orange, members of the Committees and the Council, staff and guests – thank you for the opportunity to present this opening statement concerning the transfer of the Protective Services Division to the Metropolitan Police Department. For the benefit of the audience watching on Channel 13 and others, my testimony is posted on the Police Department's website: www.mpdcd.c.gov.

The Metropolitan Police Department looks forward to the integration of the Protective Services Division into our agency, and we certainly welcome the PSD and its employees to our Department and our family. The PSD is already a well-managed and professional organization that I believe will be even more effective and even better positioned to carry out its mission, once it is integrated with the MPD.

The details of the integration are contained in the Reorganization Plan that our Department has submitted to the Mayor's Office. I will not rehash the specifics here today. Assistant Chief Gerald Wilson is with me, and he can assist in answering any detailed questions you may have.

Under the Reorganization Plan, Protective Services will become part of the MPD's Office of Security Services, which Assistant Chief Wilson now leads. As you know, this Office is currently overseeing the school security function, for which the MPD acquired management responsibility earlier this year. The Office's success in effectively transitioning school security, including management of the private security contract, will certainly be valuable as we plan for and execute the transition of Protective Services. Chief Wilson is an experienced and very talented law enforcement executive who we actually recruited from the PSD. He understands their mission and their operations. He is aware of, and sensitive to, their needs. And, along with current PSD Chief Arnold Bracy, I am confident that Chief Wilson will provide the leadership needed to oversee the transition and to move the PSD forward.

Our goal is nothing short of making Protective Services the most professional, most advanced and most effective government protection agency possible. Achieving this goal is critically important in today's environment. The terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, demonstrated something that we have known for some time: government facilities are prime targets for terrorists, both foreign and domestic. Protecting our government infrastructure is a challenge for every city in the United States. But in the District of Columbia, the risks are even higher and the challenges even greater. And this is true not just for federal facilities (which seem to get most of the public's attention), but also for our local, DC government infrastructure as well. A strike against this very building – the seat of local government in our Nation's Capital – would constitute a bold statement by terrorists. And we must do everything in our power to prevent that from happening here at the Wilson Building, or at any facility that the PSD protects.

Given the unique risks and challenges we face, I believe that integrating Protective Services into the Metropolitan Police Department just makes sense. Being a part of the MPD will afford PSD employees the wide range of training, equipment, technology and other essential resources needed to do their jobs – and do them as effectively as possible. Under our Reorganization Plan, Special Police Officers assigned to the PSD will undergo much of the same training that our sworn officers do. This

will include twice-annual firearms qualification, regular roll-call training and a 40-hour, in-service training course every year. Their training will cover both general topics that all of our employees need to be familiar with, as well as courses designed specifically for the security challenges and situations that PSD personnel face. PSD employees will also have access to technology, intelligence information and other resources that our sworn officers now have. Ready access to specialized law enforcement information and resources will help to better prepare these critical first responders. The District needs to ensure PSD preparedness not just to enhance public safety, but also to help safeguard the lives of PSD members. We will be looking to acquire more – and more specialized – resources for PSD through law enforcement grants that the unit may be eligible for, once it joins the MPD.

In addition to providing more training and resources for PSD employees, our plan also raises the bar in terms of what is expected from these members. Under the reorganization, SPOs will be held to the highest standards of ethical behavior and performance. They will be subject to the rules and regulations of the MPD, including our use-of-force policies and procedures, as well as the standards for SPOs already mandated by our Security Officers Management Branch. And while the number of citizen complaints against PSD employees has been historically low over the years, the reorganization will place the SPOs under the same system of independent review by the Office of Police Complaints that now covers our sworn members. As I mentioned earlier, the PSD is already a professional organization, but we intend to make it even more professional and more accountable to the people it protects.

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I realize that a reorganization of this type will almost always cause some degree of uncertainty and anxiety among both the employees who are directly affected and the people they serve. I want to take just a few minutes to try and address a few of the major concerns I have heard.

The first involves a concern that PSD's Special Police Officers will somehow be treated like "second-class citizens" in an organization where the vast majority of employees are sworn police officers. I can certainly understand the apprehension of people who may feel they are going from being "big fishes in a small pond" to being "small fishes in a big pond." Unfortunately, I don't have a magic wand that can totally allay these fears. What I can promise, however, is that – as an organization – the Metropolitan Police Department will treat our new employees with respect, with dignity and with fairness. We will provide these employees with the resources, the support and the opportunities they need to be productive members of our Department.

This situation is not unlike the challenges that our Department – and really police departments in general – face in trying to manage, and unify, organizations that include large numbers of both sworn and civilian employees. The MPD has tackled these challenges in a number of ways, including the formation of a strong management-labor council, the creation of an awards system to recognize all members, and by providing equal access to critical resources. Let me give one quick example. A few years ago, the Department began offering free flu shots to our sworn members. When I learned that the same opportunity was not being afforded to our civilian employees, I

changed the policy right away. Today, we are in the middle of our annual flu shot program, with both sworn and civilian members being inoculated for free.

The new PSD employees will be given access to these same types of resources and treated with the same level of courtesy and respect. As importantly, we will ensure that the SPOs themselves are involved in decisions affecting their work, including any changes to uniforms, vehicle markings and the like. Some of these changes may take time and money to implement, but we will ensure that the employees themselves are involved in the decision-making process.

A second issue I have heard involves concerns that, by being a part of the Police Department, PSD employees will frequently be removed from their regular assignments and redeployed to other areas in times of heightened alert or actual emergencies. Let me assure the Committees that this will not happen. The Special Police Officers assigned to the PSD have very specific commissions that limit their jurisdiction and their authority. SPOs are not authorized to enforce the law on our streets and in our neighborhoods. That is the exclusive job of our sworn police officers, and it will remain so after the reorganization is complete. SPOs are specifically assigned, trained and limited in their authority to protecting DC government infrastructure. That will not change under this plan.

By the same token, the reverse situation will not occur either. We will not routinely move sworn police officers from our neighborhoods to help secure DC government buildings. If additional, short-term resources are needed in our facilities, we will rely on contract personnel, who will continue to provide security services at our government facilities.

Integrating Protective Services into the Police Department provides a framework for cooperation and coordination, both in day-to-day operations and during times of crisis. But this reorganization does not change the fundamental mission or duties of either our SPOs or our sworn police officers.

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In conclusion, I would like to point out that the direction being taken by the District government in terms of infrastructure protection is very similar to the model that has been adopted by the federal government. Under the reorganization plan that created the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Protective Service, which is responsible for protecting many federal government facilities, was moved out of the General Services Administration and into Homeland Security. This move, like the one we are contemplating here in the District, recognizes two critical realities: first, that government buildings and other infrastructure represent very real targets for terrorism; and second, that integrating protective services into a larger public safety operation enhances coordination and provides for a more comprehensive and seamless approach to protecting our cities and our infrastructure.

Assistant Chief Wilson and I personally know the local leadership of the Federal Protective Service, and we have already spoken with them about the issues, challenges and opportunities facing our respective security operations at the federal and local levels. That dialogue will continue as we work

to learn from the federal experience in this area and to make our own Protective Services Division a model of professionalism and excellence at the local level.

Thank you again. Chief Wilson and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.